DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 169 562 CS 204 801

AUTHOR Black, Janet K.
TITLE Informal and Formal Means of Assessing Kindergarten Children's Communicative Competence.
PUB DATE Mar 79
NOTE 27p.; Paper presented at the Annual National Conference on Language Arts in the Elementary School (11th, Hartford, Connecticut, March 23-25, 1979)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Child Language; *Communicative Competence (Languages); Early Childhood Education; *Informal Assessment; *Interpersonal Competence; Kindergarten Children; Language Instruction; *Language Proficiency; Language Research; Language Tests; *Measurement Techniques; *Student Evaluation; Teacher Behavior; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS *Oral Language

ABSTRACT

Methods of assessing children's oral language ability are explored in this paper. Following a discussion of problems involved in the formal assessment of oral language ability, a study is described that revealed that the evaluation of the oral language of 12 kindergarten children in the social context of the natural classrcom environment, specifically the sociodramatic area, provided more comprehensive information than did two standardized language tests. Descriptions of children's interactions are provided to show how their interactional competency was categorized according to a new instrument, the "Interactional Competency Checklist." The four main categories examined are the ability to adapt to changes in the setting, nonverbal appropriateness, familiarity with normal constraints and conditions, and sequencing. The paper concludes by suggesting implications pertaining to language evaluation, teacher roles in language assessment, and programing for language instruction and by noting that the assessment of communicative competence must deal with interactional as well as grammatical competence. Illustrative tables and a copy of the "Interactional Competency Checklist" are included. (GT)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED169562

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

INFORMAL AND FORMAL MEANS OF ASSESSING KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

By

Janet K. Black, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Education
The University of Texas at Arlington
Arlington, Texas 76019

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Janet K. Black

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Presented at the National Conference on Language Arts, Hartford, Connecticut, March 23, 1979.

Portions of this presentation appear in:

Language, Children and Society. Olga Garnica and Martha King (Eds.) Pergamon, 1978.

The Journal of Research in the Teaching of English, forthcoming, May 1979.

CS204801

INFORMAL AND FORMAL MEANS OF ASSESSING KINDERGARTEN CHILDRENS COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

The importance attached to development of oral language skills is evident in numerous programs or special personnel in schools that focus on this one aspect of education.

Curriculum revision and further allocation of funds for these programs often rests upon the evaluation of the oral language program.

The assessment of children's oral language ability has presented many problems due to:

(1) the cultural and teaching strategy biases existent in the evaluation instruments and

(2) certain problems in eliciting childrens true language competence. Specifically, the phenomenon of hypercorrection causes persons in more formal situations to become more rule governed. In other words, young children in a more formal situation such as the standardized testing environment would be more prone to follow the regular rule of adding 's' to form a plural rather than using the irregular or correct form. For example, the plural of foot would be foot's rather than feet.

(3) The third major criticism of the formal standardized language tests is that they fail to take into consideration what research suggests are appropriate indicators of communicative competence. Respected measures of grammatic competence presently include an analysis of the child's syntactic complexity, vocabulary diversity, and the ability to use

morphological endings. While some standardized tests attempt to measure one or two of these features of language, the nature of the standardized testing situation appears to limit the ability of the child to demonstrate his or her actual grammatic competence. Moreover, the standardized tests are not only limiting in the grammatic assessment of children's oral language, but also neglect completely another equally important aspect of language, that of interactional competence. Interactional competence refers to those skills which pertain to communicating appropriately within particular communicative contexts. The literature suggests that language and the various functions of language are learned, practiced, and used from birth in the social or interactive context with family and significant others. Since it is ultimately the child's ability to use appropriate language in particular communicative settings which determines his/her communicative competence, it only seems logical that oral language assessment must include the social and interactive context. Observation of the child's spontaneous oral language in the social context of the natural classroom setting would provide the kind of environment necessary for the assessment of a child's interactional skills. Such a procedure would provide more complete and comprehensive information concerning a child's communicative competence.

Statement of the Problem

The major problem in this study was to determine if the evaluation of children's oral language in the social context of the natural classroom environment, specifically the sociodramatic area, provided more comprehensive information concerning a kindergarten child's communicative competence than the two standardized tests, the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities (ITPA) and Circus 10. The ITPA is a "traditional" measure of oral language ability while Circus 10 is a more recent instrument.

Procedures

Communicative competence as defined in this investigation has two aspects (1) grammatic competence, and (2) interactional competence. In this study, grammatic competence was measured by the kindergarten child's (1) syntactic maturity-ability to construct utterances into a main clause and subordinate clauses, (2) vocabulary diversity, which is the number of different words used by the subject in the total response, and (3) irregular inflections, which are the addition of certain endings to the base of a word to express such meanings as number and tense (Cazden, 1972, p. 301). Oral language samples were collected for twelve kindergarten children from three sources (1) the ITPA subtest Verbal Expression, (2) Narration of Circus 10, and (3) the sociodramatic area of the kindergarten classroom. Syntactic maturity and vocabulary diversity scores were obtained for each subject for all three oral langage samples and then compared by analysis of variance. The Newman Keuls post hoc test was used to ascertain the specific nature of any significant differences demonstrated by the analysis of variance. In addition, eight over-

generalizations of irregular noun, verb, and pronoun inflections were selected from the most frequently missed items on the subtest Grammatic Closure of the ITPA and Functional Language of Circus 10. These eight items were incorporated into the Natural Environment Interview which took place with each subject immediately after sociodramatic play. Through the use of questions and props from the sociodramatic area, the researcher attempted to elicit correct responses to the irregular noun, pronouns, and verbs which had been overgeneralized on the two standardized tests. For example, the researcher pointed to three dolls of varying sizes and said, "Sometimes when you've played in here, this doll was a child. This doll was a child, and this doll was a child. All the dolls were your children." The subjects' responses on the standardized tests and the natural environment interview were analyzed according to a correlated t test.

The second phase of the investigation concerned the assessment of interactional competence which is the child's ability to select and use appropriate situational means of behaving within the communicative context. Pinnell's (1975) categorization of the functions of language was applied to the three evaluative approaches (the subtest Verbal Expression of the ITPA, Narration of Circus 10, and the sociodramatic area) to determine the number of functions elicited by each assessment technique. The seven functions include, Instrumental, Regulatory, Interactional, Personal, Imaginative, Informative, and Heuristic. In addition, the researcher applied the Interactional Competency Checklist (hereafter referred to as ICC) to the oral language samples collected via two tape recorders, a video tape, and the researcher's notes for each subject from the sociodramatic area.

Findings

In comparison with the two standardized tests (ITPA and Circus 10), it appears that, in general, the sociodramatic area provided more comprehensive information about a child's grammatic competence in that the information seemed to be of a more extensive and accurate nature. (Table 1) In terms of vocabulary diversity, the sociodramatic area provided kindergarten children with the opportunity to use a significantly greater (.001 level) variety of words than either of the two standardized test situations. Furthermore, the Natural Environment Interview indicated that the children could use irregular noun, verb, and pronoun inflections to a significantly greater degree of accuracy (.001 level) than the two standardized instruments suggested. (Table 3) In terms of the analysis of syntactic complexity, there was no significant difference between the three oral language samples.

The second phase of the investigation concerned the interactional aspect of communicative competence. (Table 4) The nature of the sociodramatic area provided the opportunity for the subjects to use six of the seven functions of language while Circus 10 and the ITPA each elicited only one function or use of language.

This study also determined that the sociodramatic area of the kindergarten classroom provided an environment in which the researcher was able to document numerous examples of the subjects' interactional competency as categorized by the ICC. The ICC was designed by the researcher and was based upon the thought and research of Cicourel, (1972); Hymes, (1971); Lewis and Cherry, (1975); Mishler, (1976); and Schegloff and Sacks, (1973). Following is a brief description of this instrument.

Ability to adapt to changes in the setting. Ability to adapt to changes in the setting refers to the child's ability to adjust to the various themes of play, the organization of the plot, and character extension.

Description of behavior	Documentation and explanation
T cooks while M&Mi play doctor.	
M throws the medicine bottle into T's cooking bowl.	(This evolves into the theme of M&Mi throwing props into the waste basket.)
T continues to cook.	
After cooking pudding and tea, and setting the table for M&Mi, T says, "Quit it. (throwing props into the trash). You guys are always causing me trouble, so please don't!"	(At this point, T is obviously frustrated and disgusted with their theme of play. She is not contributing to this theme and is trying to stop their behavior.)
T then sets the table again, but does not want M or Mi to put the cups and plates into the trash just yet. She says, "OK, not yet."	(Here there is a slight shift in T's attitude. It is now OK if M&Mi eventually dump the cups into the trash, but not immediately.)
Nevertheless, they do dump the cups into the trash. T responds with a sarcastic, "Thanks."	
The very next time T speaks, she says to M, "How about the broom, after I sweep?"	(She has now decided M can have the broom to dump onto the trash after she is finished sweeping.) T is now supporting the ongoing theme, that of dumping props into the trash. She now combines her "mothering-housewife" role--character extension-- with the extension and organization of the plot--throwing props into the trash can.)

Following are examples of this behavior.

(1) Throw that stove in the trash.

(2) Put the whole house in the waste basket.

(3) Here's an apple (for the trash).

(4) How about the baby's chair (for the trash)?

(5) I'm going shopping.

(6) You guys better clean up. You know what? He's coming for dinner.

Nonverbal appropriateness is the second ICC category and refers to the child's use of gestures, facial expressions, body movements, intonation and stress. The following examples document T's competence in this area.

Description of behavior		Documentation and Explanation
(1) T-M:	Yes we do! (have a dog) T nods affirmatively while continuing to cook.	(intonation and stress, body movements)
(2) T-M:	There's no more (milk) left. They used it all for the cake.	(intonation and stress)
(3) T-M&Mi:	You guys are always causing me trouble, so please don't. T folds her arms.	(intonation and stress, body movements)
(4) T-M:	Thanks. (T has just set the table. M has removed a cup from the table and thrown it into the trash.)	(sarcastic intonation and facial expression of disgust)
(5) T-M:	She wants, she doesn't want to sit down, and she wants to sit there. T motions to the high chair.	(gesture)

Familiarity with normal constraints and conditions is the third category of the ICC and refers to the child's knowledge of such items as who can speak first or next, topics socially relevant, how to terminate an exchange, repair, recycling, repeating, and interrogatives.

(1) Who can speak first or next. Following are examples which indicate that young children have a knowledge of who can speak first or next.

(1) T-M&Mi: You guys want pudding or cake?

(2) M-T: Pudding and cake.

(3) T-M: I can only make one.

(4) M-T: Uh, hum pu-pudding, Ugh!

(5) T-M: OK.

(6) Mi-T: Pudding, yah!

(7) T-M&Mi: All right pudding.

(2) Interrogatives. Questions are catalysts for continued conversation and interaction. Following are examples of several of the children's facility in the use of interrogatives.

(1) T-M&Mi: You guys want pudding or cake?

(2) M-T: Pudding and cake.

---

(3) M-G&C: What's the matter kids?

(4) C-M: I ain't no kid. I'm the mother

---

(5) C-G: I'll, I'll be the nurse, OK?

(6) G-C: Okeedoekee and I'll be the doctor.
Don't forget.

---

(3) Repair, recycling, and repeating. These three conditions serve the purpose of soliciting attention to the speaker and the content of the speaker's language. Documentation of the children's facility with these conditions follows.

(1) M-T: Here baby, I'm gonna throw your little baby in the trash can.
Good by little baby.

(2) T-M: She wants, she doesn't want to sit down, and she wants to sit there.

(3) M-Mi&T: Hey, where's something else?

---

(4) G-M: Now where's that mask at? Where's that mask at? Where did that mask disappear to? Where's the mask?

(5) M-G: What mask?

(6) G-M: That, this mask.

---

(4) Topics socially relevant. In T's case most of the topics pertained to her two contributions to the theme of play through "mothering" and through throwing props in the trash can.

Housewife, mothering topics:

(1) That's OK. I'm making it for the dog.

(2) There's no more butter. I need the eggs.

(3) I'm gonna clean the refrigerator.

(4) You guys better clean up. You know what? He's coming for dinner.

Topics pertaining to filling the trash can:

(1) Throw the stove in the waste basket.

(2) Don't throw the spoons in.

(3) Those are women's shoes.

(4) How about the baby's chair?

(5) How to terminate an exchange. Knowledge of how to conclude conversation or interaction is observed when T prepares to go shopping.

(1) T-M&Mi: I'm going shopping.

(2) Mi-T: By.

(3) T-Mi: By, by.

G indicates his knowledge of how to conclude a conversation with M as he prepares to go on a Halloween date via a witch's broom.

(4) M-G: Are you going on a date?

(5) G-M: Yah, I'm going on a witch's broom. You, you too? Up we go. Yea, Halloween!

(6) M-G: Halloween's so fun!

(7) G: Shoom!

(8) M-G: By.

(9) G-M: By.

Sequencing is the fourth category of the ICC and refers to the child's ability to think back or reflect upon previous experiences from multiple sources including those in the setting and to link past experiences with present and possible future informational events, objects and resources within the communicative setting. Following are documentations of several children's ability to draw on past experiences and relate them appropriately to the on going interaction in the sociodramatic area.

Description of behavior	Documentation and explanation
(1) That's OK. I'm making it for the dog.	T knows dogs need food and has some idea of how to prepare their food.
(2) There's no more butter. They used it all for the cake.	T has knowledge of the ingredients used to bake a cake.
(3) You guys are always causing me trouble, so please don't.	M and Mi have been taking T's cooking props. T has a prior understanding of "trouble."
(4) I'm gonna clean the refrigerator.	T indicates that she knows that refrigerators need cleaning from time to time.
(5) Those are women's shoes.	This statement suggests that T has a knowledge of differentiation between men's and women's shoes.
(6) How about the baby's chair?	T appears to know that babies' chairs are unique to other chairs.
(7) You guys better clean up. You know what? He's coming for dinner.	T is aware that it is socially appropriate to clean up before having guests.

---

(8) What's wrong and what's the problem?	G demonstrates a knowledge of a doctor's examing procedure.
(9) No, we're gonna have to give her medicine.	G knows that if someone is sick, medicine is often part of the treatment.
(10) I hurt her a little. Gotta put a band aid on.	G knows that the appropriate procedure for protecting wounds includes application of a band aid.
(11) I'm gonna braid her hair. Where's the rubber band?	G indicates an awareness of the function of combs and rubber bands in keeping hair in place.
(12) You look like a real witch.	G is aware of those aspects of appearance which makes someone look like a witch.
(13) Now where's that mask at?	G knows that a mask is an appropriate part of a Halloween costume.
(14) Someone's gonna lose their britches. That's a trick.	G appears to know about Halloween tricks and pranks.

Importance of the work

This study suggests three educational implications concerning the assessment of children's oral language. They pertain to the processes of language evaluation, teacher roles in language assessment, and programming for language instruction.

First, in terms of the process of language assessment, it would appear that if more complete and accurate information is to be obtained about a child's communicative competence, standardized tests should not be used as the sole source of information. The standardized tests used in this study limited the range and accuracy of information about the child's grammatic competence and completely neglected the child's interactional competence. Whereas, the spontaneous oral language elicited in an interactive context such as the sociodramatic area generally

provided more extensive and accurate information regarding the child's total communicative competence.

The ideas discussed above pose some implications for teacher behavior. First, it appears that teachers need to change some basic attitudes toward children and in how they as teachers perceive their role. Too often, teachers see themselves as responsible for detecting deficits and disabilities in children. Consequently, the teacher becomes involved with testing and diagnosing behavior in a manner that focuses on what the child cannot do. Thus, there is little attention given to what the child can do. Both the literature and the data from this investigation suggest that children have virtually obtained communicative competence by the time they enter school. That is, they are for the most part competent both grammatically and interactionally. If children are given the opportunity to interact in environments over which they exercise some control, their response tends to be more natural and reflective of their true communicative competence. This corroborates Bernstein's (1972) idea that children demonstrate oral language competency in contexts that they know. In addition, Mishler's (1976) research indicated that first graders have the ability to vary speech style in accord with varying characteristics of setting, content, and other speakers. Thus, teachers should view children on the basis of competence and recognize their capabilities while providing activities to extend that competency. Obviously such a reverse in teacher behavior will have to involve teacher education at the preservice and inservice levels. Second, teachers need to stop the practice of preparing lessons which concentrate on the mastery of skills found on the standardized tests. This behavior can severely limit the range of of oral language experiences. Third, it

seems teachers need to change their attitudes toward the evaluative processes. Too often, teachers rely too much on data obtained from standardized testing situations and fail to be adequately sensitive to the richness of information contained in more informal environments. Teachers need to become better observers and documenters of behavior in a variety of situations over an extended period of time. They need to learn to keep informative and accurate records of behavior so that patterns of behavior and development can be seen in an emerging process. Certain techniques of analyses used in this investigation could be readily applied in the assessment of kindergarten and preschool children either as observational guidelines or for funding purposes.

This study also contains some implications for programming for language instruction. Often teachers administer a standardized test to detect areas of weakness and then administer a program to eradicate these deficiencies. Unfortunately, as has been indicated in this study and others (Cazden, 1972), the information obtained is often based on misanalysis caused by inaccurate diagnosis. The subsequent result is that children are often subjected to a remedial program which is often unnecessary and a waste of time, money, and energy. Furthermore, language programs often require the teaching of specific skills which involve much talking done primarily by the teacher. Thus, students respond in a rote manner dependent upon memory and collecting information rather than the acquisition of language through natural social interaction with others and the ultimate integration of knowledge.

The data imply the importance of opportunities for children to talk to each other as they go about their work and play in the natural classroom environment. Thus, teachers, rather than maintaining a quiet class-

room with many teacher directed activities often involving prescribed language skills, should provide numerous experiences and opportunities for children to interact and use their language with each other. It would appear that this opportunity to practice and use language with peers in the natural environment could be the most effective language program.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this investigation has demonstrated some of the limitations in relying upon certain standardized tests as the only source of information about a child's grammatic competence. In short, informal means of evaluation tend to go beyond formal methods of assessment in providing more complete information about the child's oral language skills. In addition this study suggests that the assessment of communicative competence, if it is to be reliable, valid, and comprehensive, must include interactional as well as grammatic competence. This recommendation is indicative of the trend in language research which takes into consideration a more global kind of competence necessitating semantic analysis in the social setting.

References

Anderson, Scarvia., et. al. Circus manual and technical report (preliminary version). Princeton, New Jersey: Educational Testing Service, 1975.

Berko, Jean. The child's learning of English morphology. Word, 1958, 14, 150-177.

Bernstein, Basil B. A critique of the concept of compensatory education. In Functions of language in the classroom. Cazden, Courtney, John, Vera, and Hymes, Dell, Eds. New York: Teachers College Press, 1972, p. 135-151.

Bloom, Lois. Language development: form and function in emerging grammars. Cambridge Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1970.

Brown, Roger, and Bellugi, Ursula. Three processes in the child's acquisition of syntax. Harvard Educational Review, 1964, 34, 133-51.

Bullock, Sir Alan. A language for life. The London Times Educational Supplement, February 21, 1975, 1-12.

Carroll, J. B. Development of native language skills beyond the early years. Princeton, New Jersey: Educational Testing Service, 1968.

Cazden, Courtney. Child language and education. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1972.

_____. Hypercorrection in test responses. Theory Into Practice, 1975, 14, 343-346.

Chomsky, Carol. The acquisition of syntax in children from five to ten. Research monograph series, Number 57, Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1969.

Cicourel, Aaron V. Cross modal communication: The representational context of socioloinguistic information processing. In Monograph Series on Language and Linguistics, Twenty-third Annual Round Table. Shuy, Roger, Ed. Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1972, pp. 187-222.

Cole, Michael. Culture, cognition, and IQ testing. In The myth of measurability. Houts, Paul L., Ed. New York: Hart Publishing Company, Inc., 1977, pp. 116-123.

Doughty, Peter, Pearce, John, and Thornton, Geoffrey. Exploring language. London: Schools Council Programme in Linguistics and English Teaching, 1972.

Ervin-Tripp, Susan. The comprehension and production of requests by children. In Papers and reports on child language development, Special Issues: Sixth Child Language Forum, Stanford, 1974, pp. 188-195.

Fisher, Mary S. Language patterns of preschool children. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers Colelge, Columbia University, 1934.

Goody, E. N. Toward a theory of questions. Cambridge University, England, New Hall, memeo., 1975.

Halliday, M. A. K. The functional basis of language. In Class, codes, and control, Vol. II: Applied studies towards a sociology of language. Bernstein, Basil, Ed. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973, pp. 343-466.

Hymes, Dell. Competence and performance in linguistic theory. In Language acquisition: Models and methods. Huxley, R. and Ingram, E., Eds. London: Academic Press, 1971, pp. 5-28.

_____. Introduction. In Functions of language in the classroom. Cazden, Courtney, John, Vera, and Hymes, Dell, Eds. New York: Teachers College Press, 1973, pp. xi-lvii.

_____. Language in culture and society; a reader inlinguistics and anthropology. New York: Harper & Row, 1964.

Kamin, Leon J. The politics of IQ. In The myth of measurability. Houts, Paul L., Ed. New York: Hart Publishing Company, Inc., 1977, pp. 45-65.

Kirk, Samuel A., McCarthy, James J., and Kirk, Winifred D. Examiner's manual Illinois test of psycholinguistic abilities (revised edition). Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1968.

Labov, William. Sociolinguistic patterns. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972.

Lewis, Michael and Cherry, Louise. Social behavior and language acquisition. Paper presented at a conference. The Origins of Behavior: Communication and Language, Princeton, New Jersey, October, 1975.

McNeill, David. The development of language. In Carmichael's manual of child psychology, Vol. I. Mussen, Paul H., Ed. New York: Wiley & Sons, 1970, pp. 1061-1162.

Meier, Deborah. Another look at what's wrong with reading tests. In Testing and evaluation: new views. Washington, D.C.: ACEI, 1975, pp. 32-36.

_____. Reading failure and the tests. City College Workshop Centr, an occasional paper, February, 1973, pp. 1-38(a).

_____. What's wrong with the tests? Notes from City College Advisory Service to Open Corridors, March, 1973, pp. 3-17(b).

Menyuk, Paula. Syntactic structures in the language of children. Child Development, 1963, 34, 407-422.

_____. Syntactic rules used by children from preschool through first grade. Child Development. 1964, 35, 333-546.

Miller, William, and Ervin, Susan. The development of grammar in child language. In The acquisition of language. Monographs of the society for research in child development. Bellugi, Ursula, and Brown, Roger, eds. 1964, 29, 9-33.

Mishler, E. G. Conversational competence among first graders. Paper presented at the Conference on Language, Children, and Society, Ohio State University, May, 1976.

Patton, Michael, Quinn. Understanding the gobble-dy-gook: A people's guide to standardized test results and statistics. In Testing and evaluation: New views. Washington, D.C.: ACEI, 1975, pp. 18-26.

Piaget, Jean. The language and thought of the child. New York: Meridian, 1955.

Pinnell, Gay S. Language functions exploration of first grade students as observed in informal classroom environments. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Ohio State University, 1975.

Purvin, George. The hidden agendas of IQ. In The myth of measurability. Houts, Paul L. ed. New York: Hart Publishing Company, Inc. 1977, pp. 106-115.

Sacks, Harvey, Schegloff, E. A., and Jefferson, G. A. Simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation. Language, 1974, 606-735.

Schegloff, Emanuel A., and Sacks, H. Opening up closings. Semiotica, 1973, 8, 289-327.

Strang, R., and Hocker, E. First grade children's language patterns. Elementary English, 1965, 42, 38-41.

Strauss, Levi. The savage mind. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962.

Table 1

VOCABULARY DIVERSITY SCORES

Subject	Circus 10 Narration	ITPA Verbal Expression	Sociodramatic area
A	10	48	123
B	45	42	113
C	19	42	112
D	61	53	81
E	35	64	158
F	26	20	65
G	57	87	143
H	44	49	141
I	40	72	132
J	28	53	150
L	52	59	130
Overall mean	38.50	53.17	128.50

Table 2

COMPARISON OF OVERGENERALIZATIONS ON THE STANDARDIZED TESTS AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT INTERVIEW

Subject	feet	children	men	soap	hung	women	himself	themselves
A	x	x o	x o	x	x o	x o	x o	x o
B	x	x	x o	x	x o	x o	x	o
C	x	x o	x	x	x o	x o	o	x o
D	x	x o	x	x	x	x o	x o	x o
E	x		x o	x	x o	x	x o	x o
F	x	x o		x	x o	x o	x o	x o
G	x	o	x o	x o	x o	x o		x o
H	x	x o	x	x	x o	x		x o
I	x	x o			x o		x	
J	x	x o	x o	o	x			x
K	x	x o	x o	x o	x o	x o	o	
L						x		o

x denotes items overgeneralized on the standardized tests.
o denotes items overgeneralized on the natural environment interview.

Table 3

NUMBER OF OVERGENERALIZATIONS

Subject	Standardized tests	Natural Environment Interview
A	8	6
B	7	4
C	7	5
D	8	4
E	7	4
F	7	4
G	7	6
H	7	3
I	4	2
J	8	5
K	6	5
L	1	1
Overall mean	6.42	4.08

Table 4

MEAN T-UNIT LENGTH SCORES

Subject	Circus 10 Narration	ITPA Verbal Expression	Sociodramatic Area
A	3.83	5.09	5.19
B	4.65	4.44	4.67
C	4.83	5.92	5.51
D	7.50	5.65	4.15
E	5.08	7.44	4.33
F	7.20	3.80	5.54
G	9.13	6.83	5.86
H	7.90	5.75	4.35
I	8.38	9.17	5.24
J	4.00	4.62	5.18
K	6.75	4.28	4.55
L	11.25	5.41	4.82
Overall mean	6.71	5.70	4.95

Table 5

FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE EVOKED UNDER THE THREE SAMPLES

Function	Circus 10 Narration	ITPA Verbal Expression	Sociodramatic Area
Instrumental			x
Regulatory			x
Interactional			x
Personal			x
Imaginative	x		x
Informative		x	x
Heuristic			
Total	1	1	6

Table 6

VERIFICATION OF THE INTERACTIONAL COMPETENCY CHECKLIST

Subject	Nonverbal Appropriateness	Ability to Adapt	Familiarity with Constraints	Sequencing
A	yes	yes	yes	yes
B	yes	yes	yes	yes
C	yes	yes	yes	yes
D	yes	yes	yes	yes
E	yes	yes	yes	yes
F	yes	yes	yes	yes
G	yes	yes	yes	yes
H	yes	yes	yes	yes
I	yes	yes	yes	yes
J	yes	yes	yes	yes
K	yes	yes	yes	yes
L	yes	yes	yes	yes

*yes denotes the researcher's documentation.

Figure 1

INTERACTIONAL COMPETENCY CHECKLIST

I. Ability to Adapt to Changes in the Setting

This category is based on Cicourel's second and fourth properties of interactional competence and attempts to assess whether young children can "behave as if they share the same social setting and are receiving and processing the same information," and "can normalize discrepancies to sustain social interaction" (Cicourel, 1972, pp. 217-18). These properties were adapted to the sociodramatic environment under the following subcategories.

A. Adjusts to the various themes of play..... ☐

B. Extends the organization of the plot..... ☐

C. Extends character development..... ☐

II. Nonverbal Appropriateness

This category is based on Cicourel's fourth property of interactional competence, and attempts to assess whether young children possess "normal form repertoires" of possible appearances, behaviors, and utterances that can be understood when emergent in contextually organized settings (Cicourel, 1972, pp. 217-18). This property was adapted to the socio-dramatic environment under the subcategories of gestures, facial expressions and body movements. In addition, two other subcategories of nonverbal vehavior, vocal intonation and stress, were included based upon Mishler's (1976) research which indicated first graders use of appropriate stress and intonation.

A. Uses appropriate gestures..... ☐

B. Uses appropriate facial expression..... ☐

C. Uses appropriate body movement..... ☐

D. Uses appropriate vocal intonation..... ☐

E. Uses appropriate stress..... ☐

III. Familiarity with Normal Constraints and Conditions

This category is based upon Cicourel's third property of interactional competence which concerns such items as a knowledge of who can speak first or next, what topics are considered socially relevant, how to terminate an exchange, repair, recycling, and repeating (Cicourel, 1972, pp. 217-18). These subcategories have been investigated in adults (Scheghoff & Sacks, 1973, 1974) and in children (Mishler, 1976).

A. Knows when to speak first or next..... ☐

B. Discusses topics socially relevant to the situation..... ☐

C. Knows how to terminate a conversation..... ☐

D. Repairs (corrects) oral language ..... ☐

E. Recycles (rephrases) oral language..... ☐

F. Repeats oral language..... ☐

IV. Sequencing

This category is based upon Cicourel's first and sixth properties of interactional competence and attempts to assess whether young children demonstrate the ability to think back or reflect upon previous experiences with present and possible future informational events, objects, and resources within the communicative setting (Cicourel, 1972, pp. 217-18).

A. Links past experience with present informational events..... ☐

B. Links past experience with possible future informational events..... ☐